



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

Filming and research using unmanned aircraft

INFORMATION SHEET

Photography, filming and sound recording

No permission is required for photography, filming or sound recording under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 (Zoning Plan) if the activity is conducted in a way that has, or is likely to have, **negligible** impact on the Marine Park.

The extent to which filming using an unmanned aircraft is categorised as having a negligible impact on the Marine Park depends on a number of factors, including the potential to impact on important marine and terrestrial habitats known to support sensitive species such as seabirds, dugongs, cetaceans and turtles.

Photography, filming or sound recording using an unmanned aircraft will be considered to have negligible impact on the Marine Park and will therefore not require a permit if these conditions are met:

- The unmanned aircraft plus equipment weighs less than five (5) kilograms.
- There is no access to any Preservation Zones or Restricted Access Area Special Management Areas. Preservation Zones are identified in the Zoning Plan while Restricted Access Area Special Management Areas as identified as:
 - MacLennan Cay Reef (11–070) Restricted Access Special Management Area
 - Moulter Cay Reef (11–130) Restricted Access Special Management Area
 - Raine Island Reef (11–243) Restricted Access Special Management Area
 - Australian Institute of Marine Science Scientific Research Zone SR–19–2008
 - One Tree Island Reef (23–055) Scientific Research Zone SR–23–2010.
- There is no access to any of the aircraft exclusions areas (see [aircraft sensitive area list](#)).
- All interactions with cetaceans are in accordance with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983 (see information sheet — [whales and dolphins](#)). This includes minimum approach distances — if access within those approach distances is necessary, then a permit is required.

- The following minimum approach distances are maintained from protected species:
 - 20 metre radius from marine turtles
 - 30 metre radius from crocodiles
 - 15 metre radius from dugongs.
- When photographing, filming or sound recording nesting marine turtles and hatchlings, the drone does not involve the use of a light or approach turtles from the front (direct line-of-sight vision of animal).
- The Civil Aviation Safety Authority's [requirements and guidelines](#) are adhered to.
- Requirements under other legislation, both Commonwealth and state, are adhered to.

If any of the above conditions cannot be met, then a permit may be required. In general, applications for standard activities take approximately 16 weeks to process, and non-standard applications can take longer.

Research

If you are operating a small unmanned aircraft (weighing less than five kilograms with equipment) for visual surveys only (other than of cetaceans and/or seabirds) and you are part of an accredited institution, then no Marine Parks permits is required. This is because you are deemed to be conducting limited impact non-extractive research.

You must avoid disturbing nesting and roosting seabirds (if unsure check [aircraft sensitive area list](#)), as a permit may be required depending on your activity.

If you wish to use bigger unmanned aircraft (more than five kilograms) and you are part of an accredited institution then you must have an approved environmental management plan in place to ensure the activity is conducted in a way that will not harm the environment.

A permit will be required if you are not part of an accredited institution.



Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)

Under CASA regulation the operation of an unmanned aircraft for commercial, government or research purposes requires general aviation knowledge, and as such will require an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) controller's certificate and an unmanned operator's certificate (UOC) for your business.

If you are using an unmanned aircraft for recreational purposes please seek further advice from CASA and see their bulletin 'Flying with Control?' which specifies the rules for operating model aircraft (that is, unmanned aircraft used for sport and recreation).

It is your responsibility to ensure you hold the appropriate [CASA certificates and permissions](#).

Other requirements

A permit may be required for activities in Queensland national parks, which includes the airspace above the parks.

Please contact the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service to ascertain if there are any particularly sensitive areas immediately adjacent to your proposed areas of operation and any permit requirements that may apply.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service can be contacted by emailing:
gbrmppermits@npsr.qld.gov.au.

For more information

- **Email:** assessments@gbrmpa.gov.au
- **Permits hotline:** (07) 4750 0860
(9am–2pm, Monday to Friday)